

Wood, Casey A.

Some Stray Notes

OF AN

Eastern Journey.

[Printed for Private Circulation Only.]

1897

HAMBLIN PRINTING CO.
CHICAGO.

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Some Stray Notes of an Eastern Journey.

By C. A. W.

BUCHAREST, ROUMANIA, August 19th, 1897.

Our experience of the weather thus far has fully justified the experiment of making the Mediterranean trip during midsummer. In spite of the doleful warnings of those who had been there (in the winter) nineteen of us left Rome on the morning of July 23d and had a most delightful and *cool* journey of sixteen hours across country to Brindisi, taking the Austrian Lloyds steamer *Habsburg* thence about midnight. The Chicagoans of the party were Dr. Nicholas Senn, Dr. D. R. Brower, Dr. and Mrs. Casey Wood, Miss Isabel McIsaac, Mr. Daniel Brower, Mr. William Senn, Dr. E. S. Talbot, Miss Talbot and Dr. Lucy Waite.

The southeastern part of Italy is not as well known to the tourist as it ought to be; chiefly because he is likely to imagine, after an acquaintance with the central and northern portions only, that a prosperous Italian agricultural community does not exist. After the railway crosses the Apennines north of Naples, it enters and runs through a plain about 100 miles long by 10 miles wide that might well be called "a land flowing with milk and honey." On the table lands are grown wheat, corn and oats in abundance, while on the lower levels almost every acre is planted with olives, figs, dates and grapes. Sidetracked along the railroad we saw numerous tanks—quite similar to those used by the Standard Oil Company—for the carriage of wine. The houses even of the peasantry are more imposing, cleaner and better kept than those found in other parts of the country, while the universal employment of whitewash for fences, barns, graneries and factories is very agreeable to the eye—these buildings being surrounded by the varied tints of green orchard and field. There is also another reason why this part of Italy is a particularly pleasant one to travel through—the people appear to be well fed and comfortably clad, and there is almost an entire absence of that *beggary* which in other parts of Italy annoys and distresses the visitor. Moreover, the dried-up and barren looking soil which one commonly encounters in southern countries during August is altogether lacking in this beautiful part of the world.

We would offer a word in favor of the railroad from Brindisi and of advice to those who may think of taking it in summer. The roadbed is made of crushed lava and is absolutely devoid of dust. We encountered it almost all the way to Caserta, and when we began to cross the mountains a heavy rain storm still further cooled. Of course the subsequent journey across the mountains then along the shores of the Adriatic were, for obvious reasons, pleasant. Do not make any special preparations for the except that of laying in a stock of sweetened lemon juice. Fresh, cooled water is sold at most railway stations, and a cents a grateful drink may be had almost everywhere. Sunday, even in second class carriages, can be made with few annoyances than would be encountered in traveling in a Pullman the same time of year, from Chicago to Buffalo.

A second agreeable disappointment was reserved for the character of the boats that ply between the south Italian ports of Brindisi and Patras (one of the seaports for Athens). The best of the Austrian Lloyds', and we were assured that our vessel, though it was an average specimen. It was everything that could be desired with large, roomy cabins containing two or more beds—two in each. The ventilation of these was unusually good, and the portholes were open almost all the time we could not see. Finally, the meals on board were excellent. Before we reached the island of Corfu we came upon the first evidence of the war. We sailed somewhat out of its regular course to pick up some wretched peasants and artisans from the Turkish seaports of the capital of Epirus. The Turks established a military post and had immense stores of flour for the use of the army on the northwest borders of Greece. The Greek fleet made use of it, however, and we had a good opportunity of seeing how modern artillery can make in a small town. We saw walls in all states of demolition. Some of them were merely piles of rubble and there with holes and partially burned while others were torn to pieces. One large building had two walls and the roof with parts of the flooring and staircases still in place. In contrast with all this a few companies of Turkish soldiers were seen at the end of a ruined granary, over which the red crescent was flying, which the regimental band discoursed what probably passed for sweet music. Corfu is delightful at all seasons of the year. One may easily understand why the Empress of Austria

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island for the magnificent palace she built there a few years ago at
such enormous expense. We saw evidences, even during our short
stay, of the misdirected philanthropy that induced Mr. Gladstone to
present this and the other members of the Ionian group of islands to
the newly formed Greek monarchy. This action on the part of the
British Government was quite in accord with the wishes of the British
people and was done at the request of the inhabitants themselves, but
it is only another illustration of the truth that a strong and well
directed foreign rule is preferable, so far as material results are con-
cerned, to home government of the indifferent sort that the Greeks have
exhibited. With characteristic energy the British built roads, estab-
lished schools, encouraged agriculture and manufacturers of all kinds
and generally stimulated the indolent Greek to enterprises of various
kinds. Incidentally, of course, they regulated his taxes and saw to
it that he bought as many British goods as possible. But no oriental
likes to be incited to action that includes a regular program of con-
tinued work—even if it be in his own interest—and one may very
well question whether the Ionians do no still prefer their decaying
industries and crumbling country to the spick-and-span prosperity of
British rule.

At Patras we first encountered the luscious, little, purple grape
which, when dried, constitutes the "currant" of commerce. We saw
hundreds of acres of this delicious fruit and made many enquiries
from our genial consul in Patras, Mr. Jennings, and others regarding
it. The merchants are awaiting, with much anxiety, the outcome of
the tariff discussion, since a protective duty on currants means much,
not only to them but to all Greece. The cultivation and preparation
of the currant-grape for the market furnish a livelihood to a large
percentage of the population both of the island and mainland about
Patras, and the exclusion of the millions of pounds of dried currants
annually consumed by us would be a serious blow to them.

Very little is said about the comfort and still less about the pic-
turesque beauty of the railway journey from Patras to Athens. After
considerable enquiry we concluded that the canal across the isthmus of
Corinth is not as well patronized as one would have expected. From
Cephalonia, opposite the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth, to the
immediate Athenian seaport of Piraeus is 366 miles round the Pello-
ponesus, while the direct route through the gulf and canal is only
184 miles, and yet neither our vessel nor those of the Italian or
French lines took advantage of the shorter route. We understood
that the intricacies of the latter journey as well as the tolls imposed

upon vessels passing through the canal more than com-
the gain in mileage. Whatever be its commercial status,
no more imposing view than that gained by the traveler
the canal by a bridge nearly 230 feet above the water below
him lies the waterway, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, 100 feet wide, or
cut through solid rock, and the bird's eye view so obta-
striking. The canal is entirely without locks, as the height
in the Aegean sea is the same as that of the gulf. The work-
ing the canal was really begun by Nero and has, at inter-
valled by centuries, proceeded until finished a few years ago.

The railway then skirts the northern shore of the Saronic
passes for miles along rocky cuttings that closely abut on the
strange that so little is published regarding the magnificent
sea and mountain obtained along this the Riviera of Greece
far surpass their Italian counterparts not only because of the
and extent of mountain, plain and sea included in the passage
because the Greek line runs many hundreds of feet higher
French railway or the carriage road from Cannes to Genoa
places the roadbed is carried quite to the edge of perpendicular
whose bases are washed by the waters of the Aegean sea.

We found Athens in a state of "sulks." The military
commonly plays in the Place de la Constitution had ceased
evening concerts, and there was an air of depressed expecta-
vading everything. The curious American naturally
medias res as soon as he enters a country that is politically
interesting, and we interviewed everybody on the subject
who could or would speak about it in French, English,
Italian—not always with the same results. As far as could
the warlike sentiment had been universal and sincere, but
rations for the struggle were woefully inadequate. Among
met a number of Red Cross nurses on their way to England
while extolling the bravery of the Greeks, admitted that a
of the service were demoralized after the first engagement
Turks. Of transportation facilities there were none, and the
sariat department existed in name only. With a poorly
on land, partially supplied and imperfectly disciplined, and
whose operations were confined by the Powers to Turkish ter-
cent to Greek territory, it is small wonder that so little im-
made upon a numerically superior force of the enemy armed
modern rifles and drilled and led largely by German, Russian
English officers. It seems a pity that the Greeks did not

the canal more than compensates for its commercial status there can be gained by the traveler as he crosses 100 feet above the water below. Beneath the bridge, 100 feet long, one-third of the bird's eye view so obtained is very fine. The work of digging, without locks, as the height of water is that of the gulf. The work of digging by Nero and has, at intervals measured, until finished a few years ago.

northern shore of the Saronic Gulf and the islands that closely abut on the sea. It is regarded as the magnificent views of the Riviera of Greece. The variety of parts not only because of the variety of land and sea included in the panorama but also because of the heights of the mountains, many hundreds of feet higher than the highest peaks of the Alps. In many places the road from Cannes to Genoa. In many places the road to the edge of perpendicular cliffs and the waters of the Aegean sea.

of "sulks." The military band that played the national anthem. The Constitution had ceased to give us an air of depressed expectancy previous to the American naturally plunges in a country that is politically or socially everybody on the subject of the war and it in French, English, German or other results. As far as could be learned, universal and sincere, but the preparation was inadequate. Among others we were on their way to England, and they, the Greeks, admitted that all branches of the army after the first engagement with the Turks there were none, and the commission only. With a poorly armed force and imperfectly disciplined, with a fleet of ships by the Powers to Turkish ports adjacent, it is no wonder that so little impression was made by the force of the enemy armed with the latest largely by German, Russian and American arms, that the Greeks did not wait their

opportunity (as the Bulgarians have done) and acquire territory as it falls away from the slowly crumbling empire of the Turk. One cannot help feeling a sort of pity for the modern Greek. He exhibits, in his native country at least, many qualities that are admirable. We saw very few beggars in Greece, and there is certainly less of the objectionable dirt and national abasement that one meets with in Italy. There is an air of dignity, self-respect, and independence (and a corresponding absence of frenzied gesticulation) about the people that is refreshing after a visit to Italy. On the other hand *laissez faire* methods seem to prevail everywhere. Improvidence is even more marked than it is in Italy.

We visited several Atherian schools, one in particular founded by the Queen and devoted to teaching girls various skilled occupations. They made very artistic embroidery, rugs, silks, lace, etc., and have more orders on hand than they can fill.

Some of us attended for the first time a Greek funeral, and, although we subsequently saw several others, we could not become reconciled to the idea of having the corpse exposed in its burial clothes as it was borne along the public streets—the coffin lid being carried in advance by some of the professional mourners. The ceremonial in the church was very impressive with the choir and half a dozen priests, gorgeously robed, intoning the service.

In Athens we first encountered the strings of wooden beads carried chiefly by the men of all classes. These are not rosaries and have nothing to do with religious observances, but simply furnish mechanical occupation for the hands while sitting in a cafe, talking, riding in the street cars, etc. Instead of working off surplus energy by twisting a watch-chain, pulling at the moustache, rocking in a chair or chewing gum, as we do, the male Greek pulls out his string of beads and plays with them! One of us has been investigating the penitentiaries and find the only occupation allowed here to be the twirling of these all pervading beads. How much better off are they than the unfortunate prisoners in some of our State institutions who are not allowed even that consolation!

We were all solemnly warned, officially and otherwise, not to attempt to enter Greece without a properly *vised* passport, and yet nobody asked us for ours. Not only that but we could not discover, after diligent enquiry, that anybody else had ever been asked for one.

As we embarked for Smyrna on *La Syene* of the *Messageries Maritimes*, we passed the anchorage of the fleet maintained in the Piræus by the Powers—five ugly looking monsters who amuse them-

selves at night by playing their search lights over the city, away, as a gentle reminder to the populace that where there is much *light* there is also a bountiful supply of *fire*.

Although the Messageries steamers plying in the Levant and the Bosphorus are the older ships of the company and are inferior to those of the Austrian Lloyds (whose vessels we would have preferred), the best means of reaching Constantinople, the perfect way we encountered assisted us greatly in resisting the fatigues of the journey. We broke the journey at Smyrna and were delighted to see our flag flying from the *Bancroft* in the harbor. Although a little representative of the white squadron did not force the passage through the Dardanelles during the Armenian unpleasantness her officers had been able to improve their minds and learn much about the geography of Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor while off on leave in these interesting parts. Our war vessel left Smyrna about the time we did for one of the islands of the Greek archipelago for an interchange of pleasant visits. Smyrna is probably the most bustling city in the whole Ottoman Empire. It has about 200,000 inhabitants and bears all the outward appearances of a prosperous well-to-do town. As far as we could learn this prospect was decidedly non-Turkish. Those of us who mailed letters had a variety of post offices to choose from, as every European nation of any size maintains a service of its own. This is the rule in all the Turkish towns, and, by a strange anomaly, while the international postage elsewhere is the equivalent of five cents, one sends a letter to America or Great Britain for four cents. We visited the native post office and found a very courteous official who spoke French and gave us the comparative cheapness of international postage. Even in Smyrna uncalled for letters are exposed in a glass case at the front of the post office so that he who runs may read his name on them!

Another warning, that led to certain of our party buying sunshaded hats for use in Constantinople, was quite uncalled for. The Turkish capital is the most delightful summer resort one could wish for. A cool, refreshing breeze blows all day from the Black Sea, and the nights are often cold in summer. There is a shower of rain every two or three days, and the city is full of trees. There is as much need for a cork helmet here in August as there would be in Mackinaw or Atlantic City.

Owing to this alarm about the heat of the summer season since the recent war, we are almost the only American tourists in the city. We have made it, including the hotels and their attendant

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all our own. We have the pick of the foreign accommodation of all
sorts and are enjoying ourselves immensely. Somebody has dis-
covered that the butter is made from sheep's milk, but even that does
not disturb us.

It is no small matter for us Americans that we have come at the
beginning of the fruit season, and it has helped greatly when con-
fronted by the olive oil messes in which the oriental delights. Fresh
figs, pears, nectarines, all sorts of grapes, melons, tomatoes, plums,
peaches, etc., are here in abundance. On the street maize is sold,
hot, roasted and boiled, but it is, we have discovered, our
common field variety, and we have looked in vain for the sweet corn
of our native land. The city has greatly improved since the days of
Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad" (the importation of which into
Turkey is expressly forbidden), but most of the scenes descended in
that inimitable guide book are still true to life. We have run across
a number of interesting things, however, that he does not speak of.
The fire department, for instance, exhibits some of those mysteries
forever impenetrable to the Anglo-Saxon, that one constantly encoun-
tered in this eastern country. There are in the city half a dozen sta-
tions, each manned by some twenty or thirty men and provided with a
small hand engine of the pattern of 1852 and two or three vehicles
filled with ladders from eight to twelve feet long. As the streets are
generally mere passages or lanes too narrow for horses, the engines are
dragged or carried by the firemen. Several high towers have been
built in various quarters of the city, and from these watchmen look
out for conflagrations. As soon as a fire is discovered the local bri-
gade does not at once rush to the rescue. That would be "aping the
infidel dog." Permission must first be given, after due appliciation,
from the Imperial palace to extinguish the fire! Until quite rec ntly
this was obtained by special messenger, but it so happened, not long
since, that a fire started near the Sultan's residence, and there was for
a time extreme danger of its extending to the palace itself before the
nearest brigade arrived. Since then his majesty has graciously per-
mitted a telegraph line to be erected by means of which more direct
communication can be obtained. Last night we saw the force pro-
ceeding (that is the only word that will adequately describe the per-
formance) to a fire which was extinguished after twenty houses had
been destroyed.

The supply of water to the city, it must be acknowledged, is
excellent, and various sultans have done good work in erecting acqu-
educts and extending the pipe service to all parts of the town. Doubt-
less the command of the Koran, to pray five times daily and to bathe

the feet and hands before prayers has had much to do with the establishment of the numerous fountains one sees not only in the city but about the mosques but about the city generally.

Our party has taken many trips up the Bosphorus, and in that way we were able to see something of the fortifications for the strait and the Dardanelles. We are impressed with the fact that a more easily defended city, both by sea and land, than Constantinople could not very well exist. Nobody, however, can be said to entertain any respect for the Turkish fleet. The several vessels which comprise it have slumbered so quietly for so many years at their various anchorages that they have grown rusty and gray from neglect. We found a great section of one of the pontoon bridges at the Golden Horn near the Navy Yard torn away from its moorings and only held in place by immense chains. The guide explained that one of the alleged cruisers, in endeavoring to pass through the opening, had become unmanageable and crashed into the bank. Probably if the Turko-Grecian war had been fought at such a time it might have been different.

We visited the Ottoman Bank and were shown the marks and scars made by shots fired at the thirty or forty Armenians who seized the building prior to the massacre of last year. It is interesting to keep in mind the odd things that one studies in vain history books, that the only casualty or untoward result of that mad episode was the killing of four of their number through the accidental explosion of one of the bombs which they had smuggled into the bank. Upon their surrender the government paid the revolutionists' passage but permitted the killing of six thousand of their number. The Armenians in the Armenian quarters of Stamboul and Pera were spoken to by many eyewitnesses of the massacre and are forced to admit that the Armenians deliberately played into the hands of their enemies who are certainly too much for them both physically and intellectually.

The military hospitals in and about Athens and Constantinople, as well as the evidence of officers on both sides, prove that there was a much larger number of Turks than Greeks were killed in the late war. The wounds inflicted by the larger, heavier Greek chassepot were much more serious than those of the longer and lighter projectiles of the Turkish rifle. On the other hand the latter is less unwieldy, has a greater and more accurate range, a flatter trajectory and superior killing power than the old-fashioned Greek rifle.

Our new ambassador, Dr. Angell, has not yet arrived.

has had much to do with the establishment. One sees not only in connection with the city generally.

trips up the Bosphorus, and on our way of the fortifications for the defence of the city. We are impressed with the fact that by sea and land, than Constantinople. Nobody, however, can be found who has seen the Turkish fleet. The several vessels that have been quietly for so many years at their various posts, grown rusty and gray from disuse. The pontoon bridges that span the Bosphorus, torn away from its moorings and chains. The guide explained that one day a steamer was endeavoring to pass through the proper channel and crashed into the bridge itself. The result of the war had been fought at sea the result

bank and were shown the bullet holes in the wall at the thirty or forty Armenians who were massacred of last year. It is quite in vain that one studies in vain here to learn the result of that mad escapade was the result of the accidental explosion of a steamship that had smuggled into the bank. After their passage to Marseilles, six thousand of their humbler companions of Stamboul and Pera. We have seen the result of the massacre and are forced to believe that the Armenians played into the hands of their ancient enemies so much for them both physically and

and about Athens and Constantinople. The arguments on both sides, prove conclusively that more Turks than Greeks were killed in the massacre. The larger, heavier bullets of the Turkish rifle, more serious than those made by the English, has a greater and more accurate and superior killing powers than the old

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Secretary of Legation, Mr. J. W. Riddle, has been kindness itself. He has, among other things, obtained permission for us to attend the *Selamlık* or Sultan's procession to the Mosque so that we may see his Majesty face to face as he proceeds to prayers.

This takes place every Friday afternoon, and is equivalent to a presentation at court. Guests are introduced into the palace rooms overlooking the mosque entrance by their Ambassador or Consul and are expected to appear in reception dress. The use of opera glasses, kodacks or a sketch book is strictly forbidden. For hours before the ceremony begins every approach to the palace or its mosque is surrounded by troops. The household guard lines both side of the road leading from the palace to the mosque entrance itself. Gorgeously dressed military officers and court officials appear as the time for the Sultan's approach is at hand, then the young princes, boys from seven to fourteen, in brilliant uniforms arrive amid much presenting of arms and take places in the ranks of the soldiery. Two carriages filled with veiled women drive up. The officers of rank form a long line from the gates of the mosque to the private entrance. In a moment there is seen a brilliant cavalcade escorting a magnificent state carriage in, which are seated the Sultan and Osman Ghazi, the hero of Plevna. The *muezzin* is heard from the neighboring minarets as the carriage draws up at the mosque entrance, the long line of courtiers bow to the ground and the Sultan, placing his finger-tips on his forehead, lips and heart (the Moslem salute) returns the obeisance. At this moment we saw a poorly dressed man rush through the crowd of soldiers into the midst of the brilliant throng and attempt to throw a paper—a petition—into the imperial carriage. He was, however, seized by the officials and his poor prayer will have to be made some other time—and some other where. There can be no doubt of the deep reverence that the average Mahomedan exhibits for his religious institutions. His superstition and fanaticism are the things above all other that must be considered in studying Ottoman affairs. These are more important to him than matters of commercial or international law, of which he understands little and cares less. He is instinctively a religious warrior and hates the shop keeping Greeks, Armenians, Jews and other foreigners.

In some parts of the empire the death penalty is still paid by decapitation, and in Smyrna the heads of criminals are often exposed before the prison walls. After all this form of punishment is swift and painless, and surely if capital punishment has any deterrent effect that effect should be increased by a public exhibition of the malefactor's head—at least so says the Turk.

The public letter writer, in a country whose public instruction is confined to occasional lessons given in the most important man of considerable importance and often conducts his business in open air convenient to his *clientele*. We saw one quarter where four of these persons were actively engaged in the their honorable calling.

Not only is the Ottoman silver coinage a debased one, but the circulation of it consists of copper coins silver plated. Still, so comparatively, are coins of a the small denominations that the premium, as compared with money of a larger value, and the funny state of affairs that confronts the visitor—he is his full change, if making a purchase, unless it happens to be of large dimensions!

Not only must the traveler have his passport *visé* by Turkey, Roumania and Russia, but he must, after crossing have it *visé* to leave these countries. The authorities intend not only that no objectionable party shall enter the precincts but that nobody shall leave without their consent to the independent American who imagines that he can without these formalities will be lightly dealt with. We saw several such who were made to feel the strong arm of the oppressor.

A break in a tunnel on the direct route to Belgrade forced us to travel to Buda-Pesth *via* the Black Sea and Bucharest. On all sides of the great strides made in late years by the Empire since they severed their connection with the Turkish Empire, we were glad to visit their prosperous and well kept city capital. At the same time we left Constantinople with regret, because of its oriental dirt; its "yellow" dogs and its mediaeval method of life far the most picturesquely situated and most imposing city in the East has yet seen. The views from its seven hills, or from across the Bosphorus are not only beautiful beyond description but change every hour of the day. Naples presents a magnificent front, but the city of Constantine the Great is as much more imposing in a dozen ways than the Neapolitan capital as the Nile is grander than the ravines about our suburb of Glencoe.

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